

Message Text

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ACTION COA-02

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 1105

E. O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MARR IC DA

SUBJECT: DANES STRADDLE ON ICELAND- UK FISHING DISPUTE

REF: A) COPENHAGEN 309; B) USNATO 2480; C) OSLO 1918

BEGIN

SUMMARY. DANISH GOVERNMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO RECONCILE
ITS BALANCE LEGAL POSITION ON MERITS OF DISPUTE BETWEEN UK AND
ICELAND WITH PUBLICLY EXPRESSED SYMPATH FOR ICELAND'S EXTREME
DEPENDENCE ON FISHING INDUSTRY FOR LIVELIHOOD. ICELANDERS NEVER
RESPONDED TO DANISH OFFER LAST FEBRUARY TO MEDIATE DISPUTE
AND KNOWLEDGEABLE DANES DOUBT ICELANDIC GOVT WOULD AGREE TO
MEDIATION BY NATO OR ANYONE ELSE AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.
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1. PRIME MINISTER JORGENSEN HAS ISSUED STATEMENT STIPULATING THAT DANISH GOVERNMENT WILL NOT TAKE ANY STAND ON DISPUTE BETWEEN ICELAND AND BRITAIN ON FISHING LIMITS, BUT WILL GIVE ICELAND " MORAL SUPPORT". HIS COMMENT CAME IN REPLY TO NEWSPAPER REPORTS THAT ICELAND' S PM JOHANNESSON HAD EXPRESSED HOPE FOR MORE ACTIVE SUPPORT FROM DENMARK, AMOUNG OTHERS. JORGENSEN MADE IT CLEAR THAT SUCH SUPPORT WAS NOT BEING CONSIDERED.

2. EMBOFF DISCUSSED DISPUTE WITH BRITISH DCM, WHO SAID THAT HIS AMBASSADOR TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO SEE PM JORGENSEN ON THIS ISSUE BUT LATTER WAS TIED UP IN PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING OVER ABORTION LEGISLATION. DCM THEREFORE RAISED MATTER WITH MFA DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR JURIDICAL AFFAIRS, MCILQUHAM SCHMIDT, WHO SAID THAT HE WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO DEFEND ICELAND' S CASE BUT THEN PROCEEDED TO DO SO. SCHMIDT ALSO REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED REGRET THAT NEGOTIATIONS HAD BROKEN DOWN WHEN TWO SIDES WERE APPARENTLY SO CLOSE TO REACHING AGREEMENT. DANES ADDED THAT EXISTING INTERNATIONAL LAW ON FISHING BOUNDARIES WOULD BE CHANGED BY LOS CONFERENCE SO THAT EVERYONE SHOULD RESTRAIN THEMSELVES IN MEAN-TIME. BRITISH DIPLOMAT SAID HE RETORED THAT WAS PRECISELY WHAT THEY WERE ASKING ICELANDERS TO DO.

3. EMBOFF SUBSEQUENTLY REVIEWED DEVELOPMENTS WITH PER FERGO, MFA DEPARTMENT HEAD WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOS MATTERS, WHOSE COMMENTS REFLECTED VIEWS OF PM AND SCHMIDT. FERGO ADDED THAT DANES WERE A LITTLE DISAPPOINTED THAT BRITISH HAD NOT DISPLAYED MORE FLEXIBILITY IN AFFAIR, GIVEN FACT THAT TWO SUBSTANTIVE POSITIONS NOT VERY FAR APART. HE POINTED OUT THAT DANES, IN VIEW OF THEIR HISTORIC TIES, TENDED TO SYMPATHIZE WITH ICELANDERS PLIGHT. DANES ALSO HAVE SIMILAR PROBLEMS WITH FISHING EAR THE FAEROE ISLANDS. ON OTHER HAND, HE NOTED, BRITISH HAD BEHAVED WITH CONSIDERABLE RSTRAINT UNTIL JUST RECENTLY WHEN THEY SENT IN THEIR WARSHIPS, WHICH HE THOUGHT WAS A SERIOUS MISTAKE.

4. FARGO SPECULATED THAT ICELANDERS MAY BE RELATIVELY CONTENT WITH CURRENT SITUATION IN WHICH BRITISH TRAWLERS MUST CONCENTRATE THEMSELVES IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF ROYAL NAVAL VESSELS, THUS EFFECTIVELY LIMITING THEIR TAKE OF FISH. THIS, IN SHORT RUN, IS PRECISELY ICELANDIC OBJECTIVE. IN LONGER TERM, THEY HOPE FOR INTERNATIONALLLY RECOGNIZED PREFERENCE IN VICINITY OF
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THEIR OWN ISLAND BUT REALIZE THAT LOS NEGOTIATIONS MAY LAST FOR YEARS. HE NOTED THAT FISHING IS VITAL POLITICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC ISSUE IN ICELAND ANS SPECULATED THAT ICELANDERS MAY NOT RAISE ISSUE IN NATO BECAUSE FISHERIES MINISTER JOSEFSSON WOULD NOT WANT TO RISK CONTRIBUTING TO NATO' S POSITIVE IMAGE. ICELANDERS

WILL ALSO BE RELUCTANT TO TAKE ISSUE UP IN UN IN VIEW OF UNFAVORABLE ICJ DETERMINATION OF THEIR CASE. FARGO ALSO NOTED THAT ICELANDERS HAD GIVEN UP HOPE OF ANY EFFECTIVE HELP FROM ICNAF YEARS AGO, ADDING THIS IS CONCLUSION WHICH HAS, IT APPEARS, ONLY RECENTLY BEEN ADOPTED BY THE US.

5. FERGO CALLED ATTENTION TO DANISH INITIATIVE DURING FEBRUARY 1973 NORDIC COUNCIL MEETING, WHEN FOREIGN ECONOMICS MINISTER NORGAARD OFFERED DENMARK'S GOOD OFFICES IN ATTEMPTING TO SETTLE DISPUTE (COPENHAGEN 309). ICELAND HAD IGNORED OFFER. HE THOUGHT IT LIKELY THEY WOULD ALSO IGNORE RECENT NORWEGIAN OFFER BECAUSE THEY DO NOT WANT ANYONE TO MEDIATE, WHICH WOULD IMPLY WILLINGNESS ON THEIR PART TO CEDE PART OF THEIR POSITION. ACCORDINGLY, HE CONCLUDED, ICELANDERS MAY SIMPLY HOPE TO MAINTAIN STATUS QUO, IN WHICH ROYAL NAVY PROTECTS BRITISH LEGAL POSITION BUT ICELANDERS GET THE FISH.
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